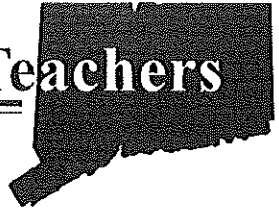


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Testimony of Ed Leavy, SVFT Executive Union Representative

State Vocational Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4200A

S B # 1040 An Act Concerning Vocational-Technical Schools

Education Committee

February 28, 2011

As an officer for the State Vocation Federation of Teachers, I have been very gratified to see some of the legislative actions taken to support our teachers and the Connecticut Technical High School System over the past year. Senate Bill 1040 is another step in that direction. Though we have significant reservations about one aspect of the bill, we believe the bill in total is in the best interests of the CTHSS and the students we serve.

As someone who supervised the evening apprentice program at Bullard-Havens in Bridgeport for many years, I was gratified to see the recommendation that the apprentice fees be raised from \$100 to \$275. The \$100 cost per class has been in place for well over a decade, and is not remotely sufficient to cover the rising costs of the program. As the budget has tightened and it has become necessary to run only classes in which the total tuition pays for the cost of the class, more and more classes have had to be cancelled. Apprentices in several programs, especially HVAC and plumbing, find themselves one class from completing the program without any school able to run that class. The apprentices have often expressed their desire to pay more in tuition so classes are able to run, and have been unable to do so. The apprentice program serves a valuable function in the economic life of our state. People are able to become successful, tax-paying citizens in professions that cannot be outsourced and are never obsolete. This provision of the bill would rectify a problem that the State itself has created. Raising tuition will increase revenue, allow more classes to run profitably, and meet the needs of the apprentices.

The provision to amend the budget is true to the financial reform movement in our system that began last year. It allows the schools the flexibility they need to run efficiently. The movement to increase flexibility in this area makes the provision to require the State Board of Education to be responsible for hiring teachers ironic. Currently, teachers are hired by a panel usually composed of an administrator, a consultant, an area department head, and a minority representative. This group provides the technical and school-level expertise necessary to evaluate a candidate. We believe the outstanding quality of teaching in our system speaks to the value of this process. Making the Board of Education responsible

may alter that process. As importantly, it will clearly make hiring teachers more cumbersome. If a teacher leaves in the middle of the year for any reason, the students are left with a substitute teacher, hardly the ideal situation. Today, the job is posted, and if the job goes to an interview the position can be filled in a few weeks. If that hiring has to be approved by the Board of Education, the person cannot fill the job until after the board's next meeting. This provision could thus slow the process another four weeks. That delay leaves students without a certified teacher, and negatively impacts their learning. While there are many praiseworthy aspects of S.B. 1040 and the SVFT supports the continuing legislative effort to improve our system, we believe this provision needs to be reconsidered. Thank you.